

How to Recruit People to Your Events and Action Council

Find the right people in the right places to join your event or team.

Whether you're planning a visit to your elected official's office, organizing a phone bank, hosting an educational event about reproductive rights and health care, or planning your next Action Council meeting, we always want to be thinking about how we are expanding our movement and using events as opportunities to bring in new people.

Recruiting can be tough work. It's not always easy to know who to ask to join you in your work or how to ask them. Not to worry: we've got you covered. Below is everything you need to know to find and ask people to join you, so that you can build power together for the long haul.

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I. Recruiting Basics

When you're thinking about recruiting volunteers for your event or team, the first thing to do is think about **your audiences** and **what channels of communication** you will use for each audience. Different audiences will respond on different channels of communication so it's important to figure out who you want to recruit and then where to reach them!

II. Identifying People to Recruit

To start, think about people who might have some kind of self-interest in the work you're doing. People will join your events and group because they have a personal connection to the subject matter you are focused on or have a connection to someone who is already a part of your event or group. Two groups to think about are:

1. **People whom you have personal relationships with:** Think of friends, family, classmates, or close coworkers. Your friend who's always rocking the Planned Parenthood shirt, your aunt who constantly posts about how much she hates the Trump administration, your co-worker who volunteers for progressive causes. These people already like you and care about the things you do, so they'll be great to have at your event or on your team!
2. **People in places interested supporters might be:** These aren't people you know personally, but people that might be likely to support the work you're doing in some way. People in local community groups or at rallies, protests, and community events are all good folks to connect with.

To help get organized, make a list of people in the first group that you could personally ask to join. Then make another list of potential events, local community groups, large local employers who might have Employee Resource Groups, and online spaces such as Facebook groups that you could go to for recruiting people you don't know personally. Put due dates next to the names and events so that you stay accountable to yourself.

Remember that when you're recruiting for a team you don't need to recruit a huge group of people to start—getting 2 or 3 people on your team who are consistently engaged is an excellent place to build from. It means that you'll be able to get a *lot* more done than you could alone, and over time you'll be able to recruit more people into your work!

When you're recruiting for events, you'll likely want more people, but the exact number will depend on the type of event. For letter writing parties, or issue conversations, a group of 10 or 15 people can be enough to make your message heard loud and clear. For film screenings or an empty chair town hall event, you may want to have 50 or 100 people show up. However big you want the attendance at your event to be, make sure to set yourself a recruitment goal that is both ambitious and attainable.

And keep in mind that even recruiting a few people will mean talking to a LOT more people than you want to attend since only some will say yes and even fewer will follow through. This is probably the most frustrating part of recruitment. We have found that generally 30%-50% of the people who RSVP will actually attend, so plan ahead and make sure to get at least 2 or 3 times the number of people you want to attend to RSVP.

Another great way to boost recruitment for events is through creating an Organizing Committee or Host Committee. A Host Committee is a group of people who support your cause and are well connected in their own communities. When you invite someone to join the Host Committee, you ask them to commit to recruiting a specific number of attendees to the event. In your promotional materials and at the event you should celebrate and thank the Host Committee members.

When creating your list of people to reach out to, it is important to be intentional about being inclusive. Unless we make the intentional effort to include people with different identities based on age, gender, or race or ethnicity we are at risk of self-segregating.

III. Channels of Communication

Once you've got a list of people you want to recruit, it's time to reach out!

For your personal contacts you should talk to them how you normally do. If you usually call them, give them a call. If they don't answer phone calls and love to text, send them a text. If you normally Snapchat them or DM them, go for it!

For people you don't know yet, but you think might be interested, go to the places you know they will be at. For in-person events ask the event organizers ahead of time if it might be okay to hand out recruitment materials, or set up an informational table to get people interested. If it is a rally you may want to try crowd canvassing ([see the toolkit on how to do that here](#)).

If the event or meeting is taking place near a Planned Parenthood organization's office, reach out to the Public Affairs staff at the local office to let them know about your event, invite a representative to join and ask them if they can help to promote the event through their promotional channels. This could include sharing on their social media channels, sending out through their email or print newsletters, and posting a flier about the upcoming event in the office. If you do not already have a connection with an organizer or volunteer manager at your local Planned Parenthood organization, [look up your Planned Parenthood offices here](#).

You will also want to add your event to the Planned Parenthood Action Fund online events tool here: <http://act.plannedparenthoodaction.org>. [See the step by step instructions here on how to do that](#).

For recruiting in digital spaces such as Facebook groups, consider posting about your work or event and providing people with a way to contact you, either by commenting in the thread, directly messaging you, or emailing you. Be sure to review the group guidelines and rules before you do this though to be respectful of others. When recruiting people from communities you are not a part of, it can be helpful to connect with a member of the group to be a messenger

for your event. Getting a trusted messenger to communicate your invite will provide validation and a strong reference for what you're doing.

Keep in mind accessibility needs, especially during meetings and events. This includes securing a space with gender-neutral bathrooms, considering ASL interpreters for events, being inclusive of non-English speaking folks when recruiting/leading a teach-in.

IV. Sample Recruitment Conversations

It's not always easy to ask someone to join your team or event! It can even feel a little awkward. But remember that you're *giving* the people you invite an opportunity to participate in meaningful work that connects with their values and goals. That's really exciting for them!

Here's a few tips on how to communicate the opportunity to someone who might join your group or attend your event:

- 1. When recruiting people to join your Action Council it is important to spend time getting to know people personally before asking them to join you through a 1-on-1 conversation.** Some questions you can ask in your 1-on-1's are:
 - **Where do you work / go to school? How long have you lived here?**
 - *Why ask this:* Research shows that often the most important reason people join volunteer groups is for a sense of belonging, especially when they are in a transition point in their lives (e.g. they just graduated from college or moved to a new city). These questions can help you understand if people are looking to be part of a new group.
 - **What do you do outside of work / school? What do you love doing? What are your hobbies?**
 - *Why ask this:* Understanding what skills and interests people are bringing to your team or event can allow you to find a role for them that improves your work and makes them feel like they're contributing as well.
 - **I'm personally taking action on [issue you're working on] because [share why you are working on it]. What motivates you personally about this issue?**
 - *Why ask this:* Understanding someone's personal motivation around the issues you are working on is a good way to understand what might engage them. Sharing your own personal story can be a way to help model that, and make them more open to sharing too.
- 2. If it seems like there might be a good fit, then you can say something like:**
 - "Well, as you know I'm working on building out a local Planned Parenthood Action Council. We're building a group of folks to [mention whatever project or campaign you're currently working on]. I know that you're looking for [a

community taking action on X issue; putting your skills in Y to good use] and I really think that this [event / team] could be a place for you to do that with a group of great people. What do you think?"

Don't worry if you can't get every single person you communicate with to join your event or team. If you can find the people that want to be part of your community, in the long-run that'll make your event or team stronger and more fun for everyone involved.

V. Reminding RSVPs

Once you've got people committed to join you, make sure to remind them in the days leading up to the event or team meeting! In addition to emailing them, you should make sure to make confirmation calls and send reminder text messages.

3-5 Days Out: Make Confirmation Calls

Be sure to make calls to confirm attendance to your event or team meeting in the days leading up to it. The number of people who turn out will increase dramatically if you ask them for a firm commitment. Start your confirmation calls a few days before your event and continue to follow up with anyone you don't reach over the phone the first time you call. Be sure that all RSVPs are confirmed, re-confirmed and re-confirmed again – e-mailing a reminder isn't enough! Make sure you make it easy! Let people know what bus they might take to get there, where there is parking, if carpools are available, etc.

Day Before and Day Of: Text Message Reminders

The day before your team meeting or event, be sure to send a text message reminder to all your RSVPs with the information of your event (including time and location) and ask them to confirm if they can make it. Make sure they know who to contact if they have any last-minute issues with finding directions. On the day of the event or team meeting, you can reply on the same thread, reminding them of the time and letting them know you're excited to see them!

This may seem like a lot of confirmation messages, but these reminders are the most important thing you can do to make sure people show up at your events!

VI. Engaging People for the Long Haul & Checklist

Got your people recruited? Nice work! Now it's time to help your team work together for the long-haul.

We've got everything you need to help you do that in our [Team Building toolkit here](#). Be sure to check it out!

And if you need a handy reminder of everything in this toolkit, here's a recruitment checklist you can use to stay organized:

Lead	Date	Description	Time Frame
		Establish a date and time for your event or team meeting.	3-4 Weeks Out
		If your event or meeting is taking place near a Planned Parenthood organization office, reach out to the Public Affairs staff to let them know	3-4 Weeks Out
		Add your event to the Planned Parenthood Action Fund online events tool	3-4 Weeks Out
		Make a list of people with whom you have personal relationships with that you can recruit	2-3 Weeks Out
		Make a list of places interested supporters you don't know personally might be (upcoming events, local community groups, Facebook groups)	2-3 Weeks Out
		Consider forming an Organizing Committee or Host Committee for your event to ramp up recruitment	2-3 Weeks Out
		Begin reaching out to your contacts and other communities and recruiting them	1-3 Weeks Out
		Send out your meeting or event information to your RSVPs via email and other channels as needed (social media, text, etc.)	10 Days Out
		Send a 2nd reminder email to your RSVPs	3-5 Days Out
		Make multiple rounds of confirmation calls to RSVPs to remind them to come	3-5 Days Out
		Send a final reminder email to your RSVPs	Day Before
		Send a reminder text to your RSVPs	Day Before
		Send a final reminder text to your RSVPs	Day Of